

LONG AGO DUXBURY

By ALISON ARNOLD

Back in 1907 there were few automobiles in Duxbury for little girls to watch out for when they crossed Washington street. In those days most families went to Duxbury for the summer by train, for the roads were deep in sand and a trip from Boston by car took at least three hours.

Dogs were not restricted to baggage cars then. So families with children and dogs, cats in green balsa bags and canaries in cages filled the South Shore trains. Along about Greenbush there was a particularly noisy crossing signal which always made the dogs bark.

Upon arriving in Duxbury, a horse-drawn "barge" with "Martha Washington" lettered along its side, met the train. Wooden steps in back led to the interior of this vehicle, which had long seats facing each other. It came from Briggs' livery stable opposite the cable office, owned by Eben Briggs' father and often driven by Eben. As the barge croaked and rocked along King Caesar Road, the sand whirled up along the hubs of the wheels. At South Duxbury, two smaller barges met the train - the "Pet" and the "What Cheer". These were driven by Mr. Harding.

No Town Water

In those days there was no town water. Kitchen pumps produced ice-cold well water to drink, while windmills whirled and clattered to furnish water for bathing. Occasionally, an electric pump was installed to offset windless wash-days.

There were no street lights, either, and lanterns were carried on night visits. There were movies at Mattakesett Hall twice a week with a piano accompaniment played by Jimmy Ingalls. The walk home was very dark, especially under the trees in front of where the Everett house now stands.

The Yacht Club was then on stilts on the edge of the bay at the end of Freeman Place. That building is now on the golf course. In 1918 the present Yacht Club was built. After the dances it was a sandy walk up the hill by the churches, which looked very white in the moonlight. There was no golf club and cows grazed on the links and were often hit!

Winsor House Closed

The Winsor House was closed for many years with its doors boarded up and blinds drawn tightly over the windows. The grass grew high, and behind a wall was a huge wooden settee which afforded a perfect vantage point for flaming summer sunsets. For an imaginative little girl this shuttered house held great fascination and long hours were spent rambling about in the tall grass and peeping under the blinds to catch glimpses of the dark interior with its surrounded furniture. Many mystery stories were woven about this old white house waiting patiently to be opened.

The Wright house, opposite the Public Library, however, which is now shabby and empty, was then an example of well-kept luxury. Gleaming brughams rolled up and down the long, lamp-lit driveways with great urns of flowering plants at the entrance. The tall elms cast long shadows on the velvet green lawns, lights twinkled from the big house, and gardens bloomed behind closely-clipped box hedges.

Hall's Corner had no markets in 1907 and Cushing's Garage was Cushing's Livery Stable. You could rent a horse and surrey - fringe and all - by the hour, and drive through the woody roads. One of the barefoot Cushing boys - Earl,

Paul or Lavi - would bring the surrey to your door and you would drop him off before going for your drive, picking him up again on the way home to drive the equi-page back to the stable.

There were three grocery stores: W. O. Peterson's on Washington street where Walter Prince's house now stands; Sweetser and Arnold's (no relation), which is now run by Mr. Sweetser's grandson, Clifford Wyman; and the famous Ford's store, which was burned down and was said to be the oldest in the United States. It was a fascinating place, cool, dark and spicily-smelling and you could buy wonderful sage cheese there.

Typical Country Store

Sweetser and Arnold's was a typical country store where you could buy everything, from a spool of thread to a wagh boiler, as well as groceries and "East India Goods." Josselyn's, in those days, was famous for its penny candy, paper dolls and all kinds of magazines.

Paul Peterson's drugstore was the meeting-place for those who wanted ice-cream sodas, and the goal of many a walk. In fact, walking to the library from Surplus street was quite the thing in those days, with a stop either at the drugstore or at Currier's ice-cream parlor next to where the Rural Society now has its headquarters.

Joshua Cushing lived where the Herbert Kelleys now spend the summers. He was an auctioneer and held many of his auctions next door in the house now owned by Oliver Barker. He stored his treasures there and many a gate-leg table and Chippendale chair went for fifty cents or a dollar.

The National Sailors' Home was the Powder Point School for Boys in winter, and Powder Point Hall for boarders during the summer. Familiar names along the Point were Converse, Benedict, Ellison, Phillips, Hukins, Peterson and Young.

Remember Charlie Hawkins?

Charlie Hawkins, who could neither read nor write, delivered your mail and your paper if you lived between the Duxbury Post Office and W. O. Peterson's Store. Twice a day he trudged along with his leather mail-sack. He carried the mail in individual mailbags made by the owners and he could tell each one by its color or texture. And although he was unable to read, he could always tell the Herald from the Post.

Summers were long in those days. Trips to town were rare and it seemed an eternity from the time when the daisies and buttercups grew in the meadows till goldenrod fringed the roadsides. There weren't six cocktail parties every Saturday with everyone trying to outdo everyone else. But you could picnic on the big beach while the sun set across the bay and the moon rose over the ocean. There were forget-me-nots growing in the brook near the golf links, meadowlarks sang and the wind sighed through the pines. Gulls soared over the sand, the waves rose and fell, and in the summer dusk, thrushes sang and crickets chanted. They still do.